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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a set of arguments in support of maintaining a cabinet-level Department of Education. It first traces the history of the federal role in education, which was established early in the history of the United States and has evolved over the decades through a series of specific responses to the nation's educational needs. It has never been as a comprehensive plan to nationalize American education. The next chapter presents a threefold rationale for federal involvement in education: to broaden access to education, to enhance the quality of education, and to provide financial assistance to local school districts. Federal education programs are needed because (1) state and local agencies are unable or unwilling to protect the political, economic, and educational rights of the disadvantaged; (2) improvement of the education system is a constant and important goal; (3) the federal government's tax base is broader, and its taxes are less regressive than state and local taxes; and (4) certain activities, such as research and information collection and dissemination, are solely national level functions. A series of appendixes provide a fact sheet on the Reagan Administration's proposals to dismantle the Department of Education and a summary of the accomplishments of the department, along with a letter to Congress describing right-wing attacks on the Department of Education, and a list of national associations supporting the Department of Education Coalition. (TE)

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The Federal Role in Education

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An NEA Policy Paper

EA 018 147

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A. Fact Sheet on the Reagan Administration Proposal to Dismantle the Department of Education and a Summary of Accomplishments Prepared by the Department of Education Coalition, December, 1981.

B. Letter to Congress by Linda Tarr-Whelan, NEA Government Relations Director, on Right-Wing Attacks on the Department of Education.

C. Members of the Department of Education Coalition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
THE FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION

There is a legitimate role for the Federal government to play in education of the American citizenry. That role was first recognized by Congress in 1787 and has been reinforced numerous times since. The Federal role in education has three essential purposes:

- To broaden access to education.
- To enhance the quality of education.
- To provide financial assistance to local school districts.

In 1979, Congress passed, and the President signed, legislation establishing a Department of Education. Today, both the Department and the entire Federal role are being attacked as unnecessary—or worse.

This paper traces the history of the Federal role in education, explains the rationale for it, and presents the wisdom of maintaining a Cabinet department.

Revised Edition June 1982

Food for Thought

"Only the educated are free."

—*Epictetus*

"Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave."

—*Lord Brougham*

"Education is the transmission of civilization."

—*Will and Ariel Durant*

"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."

"The ultimate victory of tomorrow is democracy, and through democracy education, for no people in all the world can be kept eternally ignorant or enternally enslaved."

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

"A child miseducated is a child lost."

—*John F. Kennedy*

"At the desk where I sit, I have learned one great truth. The answer for all our national problems—the answer for all the problems of the world—comes to a single word. The word is education."

—*Lyndon B. Johnson*

"No poor, rural, weak or black person should ever again have to bear the burden of being deprived of the opportunity for an education, a job, or simple justice."

—*Jimmy Carter*

"Why should we subsidize intellectual curiosity?"

—*Ronald Reagan*

Preface

In six months since the *Federal Role in Education* was first printed there have been numerious Administration attempts to dismantle the Department of Education.

February 1982. The budget submitted to the Congress by President Reagan proposes a Foundation for Education Assistance rather than a Cabinet-level Department. The Foundation, described in Appendix A, would be a politically dominated shell primarily for block grants to the states. Congressional budgets have rejected the Foundation concept and proposed to budget for the existing structure. No Administration dismantling bill has been submitted to the appropriate Committees for action.

March 1982. In the context of the budget fight the Defense Department lobbies heavily for the transfer of impact aid to their Department with no resistance from the Department of Education. A strong counter-lobby campaign is begun to increase the funding for impact aid as an *education* program.

April 1982. Also within the budget fight the Administration proposes to repeal the transfer of Department Defense Overseas Schools to Education and additionally to move civilian schools on certain military bases (Section 6 schools) to Defense as well. Senate action has been taken to repeal the DoDDS schools transfer which we hope to ultimately defeat in the House and then in Conference. On a voice vote the Senate defeated the further transfer of schools from Education to defense.

The Department of Education coalition has continued to grow and now has 115 members. A list of the organizations has been included in Appendix C. The strength of that Coalition and the opposition to removing the Federal role in education is growing. Numerous press statements note this trend. For example:

> "Whether the United States should or should not have a cabinetlevel Department of Education is an issue with valid arguments on both sides, but it is also an issue that will certainly be resolved in favor of a department, either now or in the near future. The historical trend that started with the Eisenhower Administration's National Defense Education Act in the 1950's and captured with the Elementary and Secondary, Higher Education and Vocational Education Acts in the 1960's is not to be denied. It was further solidified in the 1970's as both Democratic and Republican Administrations augmented legislation and increased appropriations."
>
> *Harold Howe II*
> *Former U.S. Commission of Education*
> *New York Times*
> *December, 1981*

"Killing the Department of Education is turning out to be harder than its would-be pallbearers imagined. Neither outright abolition, originally pledged by President Reagan, nor transformation into a foundation for educational assistance, favored by T. H. Bell, the Secretary of Education, now seems imminent. Congress appears in no mood to rescind what it so recently created. . . .

"A foundation, patterned after the National Science Foundation, would have no representation in the Cabinet or in any other part of the Government power structure. It therefore could not determine or enforce national policies, thus satisfying those who fear Federal control over education. Its principal role would be to do research and offer assistance by way of grants to schools, colleges and other educational institutions. It would receive most of its funds through Congressional appropriations, but could probably also solicit private contributions.

"But Bob Brink, a staff member of the House Committee on Government Operations, which would have to deal with any such proposal, says the committee is 'waiting to see what the Administration is going to do.' So far, he adds, 'it's been one false start after another.' The members, he says, have 'tremendous reservations about any restructuring now' and many consider it only 'a smokescreen for cutting' budgets. The committee won't act, Mr. Brink felt, 'until there's something real on paper.'"

Fred M. Hechinger
New York Times
April 17, 1982

In the Senate, Senator Robert Stafford (R-VT) and Senator William Roth (R-DE) have taken leadership roles in the Human Resources and Governmental Affairs Committees to block precipitous action to dismantle the Federal role.

In the House, Rep. Jack Brooks (D-TX), chairman of the Government Operations Committee, and Rep. Carl Perkins (D-KY), chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, have taken the lead in assuring a continued federal role for education.

The National Governors Association, under the leadership of Gov. Jim Hunt (D-NC) and Gov. Bob Graham (D-FL), reaffirmed in February a strong federal role for education, with four components:

(1) *Access should be guaranteed* to educational programs and student financial assistance for all students without regard to family income, race, national origin, sex, or handicapping condition. Students should also have access to due process procedures for the settlement of any civil rights complaint.

(2) *Special populations* exist that are "at risk" in standard educational programs. These students include: the handicapped, limited English proficient, educationally disadvantaged, migrants, refugees, institutionalized youth, and residents of Indian reservations.

(3) *Research and development* should be pursued through national as well as state and local efforts. It should be supported through a variety of institutions including postsecondary and associated research centers. Application of emerging technologies should be emphasized. Implementing and evaluating new methods is in the national interest, as is the dissemination of successful efforts.

(4) *Preparing the work force* by providing special programs for both youth and adults is in the national interest. Federal emphasis should be on identification of occupations in high demand. Federal financial assistance should be targeted to programs related to those occupations, and to individuals preparing for these occupations.

The activity of the last six months has reinforced the need for Association members to understand the "Federal Role in Education" and to work toward the goal of preserving a strong department as a partner in the Cabinet in order to assure equal educational opportunity, enhance the quality of education, and provide financial assistance to locally operated schools.

1—A Philosophy of Education

"A civilization which expects to be both ignorant and free, expects that which never was and never will be," noted Thomas Jefferson, once in a characteristic affirmation of his devotion to the goal of an educated American citizenry. In the midst of conflict about issues such as busing, funding cutbacks, school prayer, tuition tax credits, textbook censorship and a myriad of other issues, we often overlook the fact that basic governmental roles evolve from fundamental principles.

The proposition that the federal government has a legitimate and vital role to play in education rests on such a fundamental principle—that *education is the bedrock of our democracy*. This principle mandates the continuing federal role in the education of American children.

A liberal education, available to all who seek it, is a democracy's most potent weapon against tyranny. It is education that instills within us the ability to understand the role of government, to determine what is best for America, and to develop and advocate reasonable alternatives for solving political and social problems.

It is education that enables us to tolerate human faults, foibles, and differences of opinion. Indeed, it has been America's schools that have taught us the vital lessons of tolerance toward those who are different by reason of race, religion, sex, national origin, physical impairment or point of view. And it has been our nation's schools that have instilled American values and taught basic skills to successive generations of immigrants, who, in turn, created a free and prosperous society.

This country has made great strides over the course of 200 years. As a nation we are inarguably better today than we were 100 years ago, 50 years ago or even 10 years ago, and our schools have played a vital role in that educational evolution:

- The percentage of high school graduates increased from less than two percent in 1870 to more than 80 percent in 1970. In the 16 years from 1960-1976 alone, the rate of high school completion for blacks jumped from 40 to nearly 75 percent.

- Illiteracy in this country has been dramatically reduced.

- Substantially increased numbers of Americans now obtain a college degree. The number of minorities and women obtaining degrees has also dramatically increased.

These indicators all demonstrate that we have become a much better educated country. As our education has improved, so has our economic, cultural and social life. Today, the U.S. economy is one of the most diverse and healthy in the world. Our cultural life is flourishing and Americans enjoy a range of social options that past societies never dreamed possible.

But the pursuit of excellence is, by definition, not a static mode. It is, instead, a constantly changing goal which we must pursue aggressively and continuously.

The future will surely confront us with many new and profound challenges. Rapidly unfolding technological and scientific developments will greatly influence our ability to respond to and adjust our economic and social programs and institutions. Rising international tensions will require a much more sophisticated national defense philosophy. Intensified international economic competition will force us to become increasingly more creative and productive. Each of these challenges can be met if we stick to American basics--particularly a strong education program for all our citizens.

2—The History of Federal Support

Federal support for education has evolved over the decades through a series of specific responses to the nation's educational needs, not as a comprehensive plan to nationalize American education.

A Federal role in education was established very early in our nation's history when tracts of lands for schools were set aside in the *Land Ordinance Act of 1785.* Congress inherently recognized the value and necessity of education and acted to ensure that, as the nation grew and developed, room would exist for public schools. This principle was ratified when Congress passed the *Northwest Ordinance in 1787*, again reserving land for public schools.

During the 1800's, the Federal government realized that two disadvantaged groups of Americans had been denied an opportunity for higher education. Thus, it acted to establish and finance *two major national universities* designed to redress that situation–Howard University for free blacks and Gallaudet College for the deaf. Congress later extended its determination to provide an opportunity for a higher education for all Americans when it established the *Land Grant Colleges*, thereby launching some of our most important and prestigious universities.

New needs prompted further federal action early in this century. The need for skilled workers was growing, and in 1916 the Congress enacted the *Smith-Hughes Act, which provided Federal support for vocational education.* And as wounded veterans returned from World War I, the Congress created a National Vocational Rehabilitation Program through the *National Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1920.*

Later, World War II and the Korean War spawned new Federal education initiatives. *The GI "Bill of Rights"* included several key education provisions that allowed an entire generation of Americans to attend college for the first time. *In 1950, the Impact Aid Program* was enacted to help communities cope with education needs resulting from the rapid growth and development of major military and government installations. Through the Impact Aid Program, the federal government became involved in the direct financing of local public schools.

President Eisenhower and Congress joined forces in 1958 to create the *National Defense Education Act.* This Act, a direct response to Sputnik, recognized the clear link between an educated populace and our national security. We rediscovered the fact that an investment in education was one of the surest ways to protect and secure America's freedom. It underscored what the Land Ordinance of 1785 first established: that the federal government has a clear responsibility and role in assuring that all Americans are educated.

The federal government's responsibility to education was reiterated and then increased through education legislation during the 1960s. Of particular significance was the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, which signaled a profound commitment by the Federal government to extend, expand and improve educational opportunity to all Americans. This principle was extended when President Ford signed the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1974*, which guaranteed educational access to handicapped children.

Recent action to create a *Cabinet Level Department of Education* consolidated a long American tradition of Federal commitment to (and involvement in) education. When the Department opened its doors in 1980, it provided a means:

- to streamline and better manage Federal education programs
- to establish a single entity which could be held accountable for Federal education policies and programs
- to create a voice for education at the highest level of government that would increase public awareness of vital education issues

Federal support for education has not evolved without its critics. Several basic assertions have been argued from time to time. These include:

- *Education should be a state and local responsibility.* The fact is that states and local communities have always assumed the primary responsibility for education. While vital, the Federal government contributes less than eight percent of the nation's total educational bill. It provides funds financially strained school districts must have if they are to meet the educational requirements of their communities. It provides funding for special educational needs and for equality of opportunity that many states have been unwilling or unable to institute themselves. It supports necessary research and development programs that few states or communities can afford. It collects and shares needed information and data on a nationwide basis. And it helps college students who have scant resources to pursue a higher education.

- *Federal support means federal control.* This is simply not true. The federal government has required that state and local educational agencies be accountable for the way they spend the taxpayers' money. This, of course, leads to reporting, record keeping and other requirements. But Federal support for education has been characterized by effective federal, state and local partnerships. No national curricula, hiring policies or teaching methods have been imposed. Modest federal requirements have led to remarkably efficient, scandal-free programs. Unlike other areas of federal support, like roads, defense procurement and housing, education programs have *not* been affected by waste or fraud, and state and local education agencies have been able to translate federal assistance into effective local programs. In short, the federal, state and local educational ecology works. Federal money has been targetted where it is most necessary.

- *The federal government, especially during a period of fiscal retrenchment, should concentrate on national needs like defense and economic policy, and leave education to states and communities.* Such a policy would deny America's history and imperil its future. Education expenditures directed toward maintaining a well-educated populace are a prerequisite to a strong defense and economy. And federal assistance is vital to that effort. Without it, many communities will have to fire teachers, close down schools and eliminate important programs. Critical research programs will be terminated. Thousands of worthy students will not be able to attend college. No community can be expected to foot the entire cost of a good education for all students from K-graduate school. We could, of course, decide that all Americans shouldn't have a good education. Contrary to our heritage, we could adopt the philosophy that only a select few should be educated.

> But to do so would be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Which future Edison, Ford, Bell or Salk should we relegate to obscurity? Our values and American common sense argue for what our founders decided long ago: that every American should have a good, quality education. That commitment is *national, historical, and deserving of national support.*

Even more, it is logical. Increasing our defense and industrial capability is virtually impossible without a well-educated workforce. Those who argue that the federal government should not be involved in education turn their backs on history and the collective judgment of some of our greatest leaders. They also shun reality. Traditionally, federal support for education has not been a partisan issue; nor has it divided conservatives and liberals. Nor did it lead unchecked and unmodified from the *Land Ordinance of 1785* to the Department of Education in 1980. It has evolved steadily and purposefully for nearly 200 years. At each step in this history, the appropriateness of the federal role in education has been raised, debated and resolved. And, at each step the debate concluded that the federal government *does* have a legitimate and necessary role in education.

The nation's leaders, Republican and Democratic, have consistently recognized the fundamental principle that Jefferson originally and forcefully articulated. They realized that federal support for education provided an effective national response to:

- the basic skills required by a developing nation;
- the special needs of disadvantaged people;
- the need for educated employees as the nation's economy expands;
- the desire to provide veterans with educational opportunities; and
- threats to our national security.

Without doubt, *education's importance today remains as central as it has throughout our history.*

3—A Rationale for and Nature of Federal Involvement in Education

Most educators and political leaders agree that the federal government does indeed have a legitimate role to play in pursuing Jefferson's goal of an educated and free society. This role can be described as having three distinct but complementary purposes:

- *To assure equal educational opportunity.* This means ensuring that all students, regardless of race, sex, disability, color, age or creed have access to a good education. It also means assisting students with limited financial resources to pursue a higher education.

- *To enhance the quality of education.* This means supporting and disseminating information about the most effective ways to teach and learn, and supporting demonstration projects that will help local educational institutions improve their educational product. It also means taking the necessary steps to improve education in schools run directly by the federal government for overseas dependents and American Indians.

- *To provide general financial assistance to local education agencies.* This is particularly true in instances where the federal government imposes financial burdens on local education agencies by locating military bases and personnel on non-taxable land.

In each case, these historical commitments have adhered to the principle that the Federal government should supplement, not supplant, the primary role of states and localities in education. The NEA strongly believes that this principle of partnership must be continued.

The goal of assuring access to a good education is manifested in a variety of programs and policies designed for the poor, the handicapped, those with limited English language ability, women and minorities. Key among these measures have been:

- *Title I of ESEA,* which provides funds specifically for the education of economically disadvantaged children

- *P.L. 94-142,* which requires all levels of government to equalize–and provide availability to–education for the handicapped

- *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1973,* which ensure the protection of students' civil rights

- *Bilingual education,* which provides assistance to those students whose proficiency in English is so substandard that it impairs their general capacity to learn

In enhancing the quality of education provided to school children at the local level, the federal government has carefully limited its role. Generally, funds are transmitted to local school districts for the needs of disadvantaged students or demonstration projects in specific subject areas, such as basic skills, science, etc. Other funds are used for educational research and to disseminate information about American education.

The National Education Association and other groups within the education community have supported these and other Federal programs for several reasons:

1. *States and local agencies have been either unable or unwilling to protect the political, economic, and educational rights of the disadvantaged.* The federal government has traditionally seen to it that access to education was broadened *and* protected. This need still exists in 1981. If the federal government does not vigorously protect every American's right to equality of educational opportunity, that right will be deliberately violated in some localities and reluctantly omitted in others because of insufficient funds to pay for needed programs. It's that simple.

2. *Improvement of America's education system is a constant and important goal.* Because education is a national priority which is vital to our economic and national security, the federal government must help ensure, through financial assistance to states and local education agencies, that quality education is provided.

3. *The federal government's tax base is broader, and its taxes are generally less regressive than state and local taxes.* This is true even in a period of economic uncertainty and budgetary restraints.

4. *Certain activities, such as research and information collection and dissemination, are solely national level functions.* The federal government has a clear comparative advantage over other levels of government in performing these tasks, and can conduct them more thoroughly and more cost effectively. For example, it makes much more sense (and is less expensive) to conduct a single national analysis of literacy rather than replicating 50 state studies.

The National Education Association fully understands and supports the need for local autonomy when it comes to educational policies and practices. The Association vigorously opposes any notion of a national school system. Because of this, and for the reasons stated above, NEA supports legitimate and significant federal support for education to fulfill the goals of equal educational opportunity and quality education available to all who seek it.

4—Managing Federal Education Programs

As the federal government's support for education grew over a period of two centuries, the need to ensure well-managed federal programs also grew.

This concern culminated in 1979 with the creation of the Department of Education. *The Congress, in establishing the Department, agreed that:*

1. Education programs had been poorly coordinated;

2. Fragmented and inconsistent policies often confused state and local education officials;

3. Major education issues had too often been submerged by other priorities and politics within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare;

4. No single, full-time Federal education official was directly accountable to the President, the Congress and the people to resolve education's federal-level problems.

The question of accountability has been a particularly vital one. Before the Department's creation, state and local officials, teachers, parents, and members of Congress had no one they could really hold accountable for the management of Federal education programs. When policies emanating from two disparate programs conflicted, no one had the responsibility to resolve the conflict. When paperwork requirements reached staggering levels, no one could be called to reduce the flow. In short, no one was in charge.

Today that situation has been reversed. *The Secretary of Education can be held accountable for all the educational decisions and actions taken by federal officials.* If issues involving other departments arise, the Secretary can take those issues to the Cabinet table and get them resolved.

Already, in its short and controversial existence, the Department has begun to fulfill the management and accountability goals set for it by Congress. It has, for example:

- Reduced its staff by 572 positions and saved more than $20 million.

- Substantially streamlined the regulations process. The time for issuing regulations has been reduced from 519 to 240 days and the number of offices required to "sign off" from 23 to 5.

- Established its own Office of Inspector General to search out potential fraud and abuse, and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in programs and operations.

- Developed new collection procedures for defaulted student loans. As a result, more than $42 million has been returned to the U.S. Treasury.

- Significantly improved old financial management and audit systems, with projected savings of more than $50 million.

- Reduced paperwork requirements and overly burdensome regulations for education programs by (1) changing the general reporting requirements from an annual to triennial basis, (2) revising the guaranteed student loan program and student aid forms in order to limit eligibility and reduce over/under-payments, (3) consolidating a lengthy non-discrimination assurance form, (4) proposing substantial regulatory changes in such laws as Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act), vocational education and adult education.

Many of those who wish to abolish the Department of Education do not quarrel with its record. Rather, they challenge the nation's historic consensus that the federal government should support education at all. They not only wish to dismantle the Department, but also eliminate most federal education programs and funding, transfer the emphasis for education to private schools, and discontinue federal enforcement of civil rights laws.

These opponents have resorted to provocative, distorted and nefarious portrayals of public education and the Department of Education in order to frighten people and encourage them to join their anti-public education crusade.

What will happen if these reactionary voices succeed in dismantling the Department of Education and scattering its few remaining programs throughout the government?

1. Education will no longer be represented at the Cabinet table. Major decisions about education, economic policy, scientific development and research, labor policies, and defense preparedness would be made without fully considering the contributions education would make.

2. State and local education officials would once again face a bewildering array of confused federal policies and practices. The Labor Department might set certain civil rights requirements for vocational education programs while the Health and Human Services Department might establish completely different ones for education programs for the handicapped. And no one in Washington would be accountable for the confusion. No one would be charged with the responsibility for preventing conflicting policies from developing or resolving such conflicts.

3. Federal support for education would inevitably erode even further. With programs scattered, it would be difficult to build coalitions to promote adequate funding for education. Educational groups would be isolated and left to fend for themselves. Without a departmental budget which reflects all education programs, it would be extremely difficult to assess the total federal commitment to education and determine whether or not far-flung programs were adequate.

4. Civil rights protections would be weakened and shoved backward.

5. There would be no visible official to speak for education at the national level. In the absence of such a figure, the media, Congress and the White House will make determinations about education without education representation and/or input. In short, education will once again lack national leadership. The concerns of students, administrators, teachers, and parents will be submerged to those of big business, and defense. And, in the end, education will suffer.

Rising costs, more taxpayer frustration with taxes, declining enrollments, actions by private schools proponents to divert public funds to support their programs will strain the capacity of every public school system. This is a time when the federal government must not retreat from its two-century commitment to public education for all. If federal support for education is further weakened, or if federal involvement is poorly managed, states and communities will find it even more difficult to provide quality education.

5—Conclusion

A critical and responsible federal role in American public education has evolved over nearly two hundred years. Its beginnings were virtually simultaneous with those of our nation. Since those early days, that role has been expanded and refined on numerous occasions. At each and every step of the way, new generations of American political leaders, elected by the people, have sought to improve the quality of American life by improving the quality of the education we provide our youth. Our leaders have known, as noted Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal once wrote, that "Education in America's whole history has been the major hope for improving the individual and society."

Today, our historic devotion to that principle is being attacked by a different breed of political leaders, people who believe that public education is not a basic right, who believe that the federal government is a hindrance rather than a help and who reject the words of noted philanthropist George Peabody that "Education is a debt due from present to future generations."

We face serious challenges that will require a firm national response. America must increase the skills of its work force to compete with strong economic rivals, devise effective means of training and employing an entire generation of minority youth who are in danger of slipping into a lifetime of poverty and despair, train a new generation of scientists who can tap the technological revolution and shape it for our people's benefit, and rebuild our armed services to respond to new international tensions. Education must be a key component of such a national response.

The National Education Association and its state and local affiliates are determined to maintain and improve the quality of education provided America's children. We are committed to the principle of equal and unrestricted educational opportunity. And we will not abandon the belief that the federal government should be an active participant in the process of achieving these goals. We are proud of our support of federal funding for education: we proclaim it. A free nation's commitment to its future is most directly demonstrated through its active support of education. The federal role in that effort is the national affirmation of that belief: it is also a realization that the federal government is the only level at which certain elements of equity can be achieved.

If we can, through education, respond to the new and complex challenges that await us, we will experience an exciting and rewarding future. If we do not, it will be because we failed to invest in our most precious resource, our young people.

APPENDIX A

A Fact Sheet on The Administration's Proposals to Dismantle the Department of Education and a Summary of the Accomplishments of the Department

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Prepared by
The Department of Education Coalition
December 1981

APPENDIX A-2

THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL: ITS CHARACTERISTICS

The Department of Education Coalition is unalterably opposed to the Administration's Task Force proposal to abolish the Department of Education. The Administration's senior Task Force charged with developing a recommendation to abolish the Department of Education forwarded its work to the President in mid-November, 1981. The Task Force has recommended abolishing the Department and creating a sub-Cabinet national education foundation.

The Task Force chose this alternative over their other central option, under which education programs would be dispersed throughout the government, and no major federal agency would remain whose central purpose was education.

The Foundation Proposal

The proposed Foundation would have the following characteristics:

1. It would be directed by an official appointed by the President and responsible directly to him. (In this sense, it would not be a "foundation" accountable to an independent governing board. Rather it would be a sub-Cabinet, independent agency similar to the General Services Administration or the Federal Emergency Management Agency).

2. Several major responsibilities currently assigned to the Department would be transferred:

   - Vocational rehabilitation to Health and Human Services.
   - International education to the International Communications Agency.
   - Special educational institutions designed to serve the deaf and blind to Health and Human Services.
   - Impact aid program components to Treasury, Defense, and Interior.
   - College housing to Treasury.
   - Science improvement programs for minority institutions to the National Science Foundation.
   - Indian education programs for urban, non-reservation Indians to Interior.
   - Overseas dependents schools to Defense.

3. A number of other existing programs would be terminated, including the Institute of Museum Services, telecommunications demonstrations, all library support programs, migrant education programs, and advanced graduate and professional fellowships for minority students.

4. The programs that would remain in the Foundation include:

   - Vocational Education, Title I, Education for All Handicapped Children Programs, and bilingual education. (The proposal identifies these programs as candidates for future block grants.)
   - Higher education student assistance, including direct grants and loans, and work study.
   - The new education block grant for educational innovation.
   - The developing institutions and special services programs.
   - Statistical and research activities.
   - Civil rights activities. (The proposal does not identify where civil rights enforcement authority would be located.)

ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL:

ITS PHILOSOPHY AND THE COALITION'S RESPONSE

*ADMINISTRATION'S PHILOSOPHY	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COALITION'S RESPONSE
• The federal government "intruded" into education, and this involvement must be rolled back.	• *The federal government has had a legitimate role to play in education that includes:* • *assuring equal educational opportunity for all Americans;* • *enhancing the quality of education by supporting research about effective ways to teach and learn, providing special assistance to states and communities, collecting and disseminating statistical information, and other activities; and* • *providing limited general assistance to local educational agencies.* *These purposes have been carried out in a way that supplements, not supplants, the primary role of states and localities in education. This federal role has evolved with bi-partisan support since the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.*
• The creation of the Foundation would only be a first step. According to the Task Force's memorandum, "One of the Foundation's major responsibilities would be to identify programs that are more properly the responsibility of state and local governments." An advantage of the Foundation option cited by the Task Force is that it "provides a central unit to administer existing statutes until they are changed and which is flexible enough to implement future policy changes and contraction of functions."	• *The Foundation proposal is nothing more than a guise to set in motion additional steps to ultimately eliminate federal support for education.* When viewed in the context of: the proposed termination of such programs as library support and museum services; the OMB 1983 budget proposals to cut education programs another $4 billion, or half their 1981 level; the openly avowed goal of abolishing major programs like Title I and P.L. 94-142 under the rubric of block grants--it is clear that the Task Force proposal is only an interim step toward the longer term objective of abolishing Federal education programs.
• Education is not viewed as a national priority concern, and does not merit federal attention or support. Again, the Task Force memorandum argues that an advantage of totally dispersing all education programs would be that it "emphasizes that the federal role is in the service educational institutions can provide in support of other Federal purposes."	• *No visible person will speak for and about education regularly at the national level.* Education will lack national leadership. Concerns of students, parents, teachers, school board members and administrators will be submerged to other concerns represented at the Cabinet table. Education will have the same status and influence as international communications, disaster assistance, and federal government administrative services--all needs represented by independent agencies (International Communications Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the General Services Administration).
• The Administration assumes through its "New Federalism" that the federal government should play a passive role in managing education programs.	• *Federal policy-makers that influence education will become less accountable under the Task Force proposal.* Without the prestige and bureaucratic leverage of Cabinet status, conflicts between different departments whose policies affect education institutions will go unresolved. No one in Washington with influence will be accountable for education and charged with preventing conflicting policies from developing or from solving such issues when they arise. As programs are dispersed this problem will become more acute. For example, under the Task Force proposal, school boards will suddenly have to deal with multiple agencies about the impact aid programs, rather than a single Department. Conflicting rules, application requirements and data requests will inevitably develop.
• The Administration infers that a "Foundation" rather than a Cabinet department would play a less visible, intrusive, and implicitly, less political role in education.	• *Despite its apolitical sounding title, the Foundation would be expected to carry out a strong political role.* The decision memorandum observes that "A Foundation, whose head would be accountable to the President, would be an effective vehicle for continuing to move to a more restricted Federal role. Achieving this goal will require knowledgeable and disciplined direction over the bureaucracy by a key appointed official (the Foundation head) who operates with direct support from the White House."

*This information was drawn from "the Decision Memorandum to the President from the Task Force on the Education Department," November 10, 1981.

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APPENDIX A-5

PROBLEMS WITH PROPOSED PROGRAM TRANSFERS

Certain programs proposed for transfer will be seriously damanged.

For example:

- Interior has no experience administering programs for urban, non-reservation Indians. The BIA is poorly managed. The assistance provided by the Education Department's Indian Education Program that serves urban, non-reservation Indians would be disrupted and perhaps irreparably harmed by this transfer.

- Splitting the impact aid program and dispersing it to three different Cabinet Departments will complicate program administration for local school boards. This is also a blatant attempt to split support for the program so it can be eliminated.

- Science education programs were transferred from NSF in 1979 because they received very low priority there. Retransferring them to NSF will ensure they whither away from inattention and lack of funding, particularly in light of the Administration's efforts to slash the NSF budget.

- International education programs will be re-oriented to complement the International Communication Agency's new goal of vigorously promoting American values and policy objectives. While this goal may be appropriate for the Voice of America and U.S. information activities, it will warp the education programs and open them up to charges that they are merely propaganda programs. Moreover, education-related programs such as the Fulbright program already located in ICA are being drastically cut.

- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shares many similar goals with the education for all handicapped children programs. Transferring the program will shatter promising possibilities to develop more coordinated, comprehensive approaches for assisting handicapped individuals. Moreover, this transfer is a thinly veiled step towards resurfacing the Administration's earlier proposal to abolish the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and merge its functions into an untargeted social services block grant administered by HHS.

- The overseas schools programs have been mismanaged by the Defense Department. Educational concerns have regularly been submerged to those of the military. Re-transferring the schools to Defense would assure that these concerns would not be addressed.

Finally, the Administration's proposal will not save money; Indeed, the cost of establishing a foundation and the proposed program transfers will cost money, probably millions. Furthermore, the total impact of this effort to ultimately dismantle the federal role in education will transfer substantial new costs to local taxpayers.

APPENDIX A-6

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DATE

The Department of Education has been very successful since its inception on May 4, 1980. In general, the Department has streamlined the administration of education programs, represented education where future policies for our country are being set at the Cabinet table, lowered the number of federal education staff, enhanced public access to education policymaking, and improved rulemaking, reduced excessive paperwork requirements and overly burdensome regulations for education programs.

The Public's Perception

In September 1981, the ABC News - Washington Post poll showed the public to be strongly against the elimination of the Department of Education--nearly two-thirds, of 63%.

Highlights of Accomplishments

Examples of the Department's accomplishments include:

- Reduced its staff by 572 positions and saved more than $20 million (72 positions in excess of the 500 positions required to be reduced under the Department of Education Organization Act within the Department's first fiscal year).
- Revised the regulation writing procedures substantially including (1) reduction of the time from 519 to 240 days and the number of offices signing off from 23 to 5, (2) discontinuance of regulations for unfunded programs, and (3) incorporation of public comment at earlier stages.
- Instituted a new budget process which involves the Secretary of Education as a Cabinet member to determine the impact of budget cuts on education programs.
- Established its own Office of Inspector General to search out and prosecute cases of fraud and abuse, and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in programs and operations.
- Developed new collection procedures for defaulted student loans (more than $42 million was returned to the U.S. Treasury).
- Improved the financial management and audit systems significantly (projected savings of more than $50 million).
- Reduced paperwork requirements and overly burdensome regulations for education programs such as (1) changing the general reporting requirement from annual to triennial, (2) revising the guaranteed student loan program and student aid forms to limit eligibility and reduce overpayments and underpayments, (3) consolidating a lengthy non-discrimination assurance form in the Office of Civil Rights, (4) proposing substantial regulatory changes in programs such as Public 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act), vocational education, and adult education.
- Created the Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Education to advise the Secretary of Education on the impact of federal policies on state and local agencies and institutions.

- Created the National Commission on Excellence in Education to provide assistance and make recommendations to the Secretary of Education concerning the quality of education and teaching, curricula, admission standards, educational programs, and changes in American education.

- Established the Office of Education for Overseas Dependents to carry out the transfer of the Overseas Schools for Military Dependents to the Department of Defense.

In a year's time, the Department of Education has established itself as a successful and significant agency. The improvement of public education is a very important goal which the Department is pursuing vigorously. The role of the federal government in that endeavor is necessary because of the lack of adequate state and local resources. The Department should be given a chance to achieve its goal in the interests of quality education for America's children.

APPENDIX B-1

nea

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION • 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D C 20036 • (202) 833-5411

WILLARD H. McGUIRE, President
BERNIE FREITAS, Vice President
MARY HATWOOD FUTRELL, Secretary-Treasurer

TERRY HERNDON, Executive Director

**Letter to Congress by Linda Tarr-Whelan,
NEA Government Relations Director, on
Right-Wing Attacks on the Department of Education**

Recently, Members of Congress have contacted NEA for information regarding an orchestrated petition and postcard campaign directed at abolishing the Department of Education.

The computer-derived direct mail campaign which generated these petitions and postcards makes dishonest and distorted accusations. The extremist groups which send this propaganda use emotional exploitation, coercion for money, the use of famous names, and the "big lie" technique to build a campaign of fear.

A public debate on a policy issue as important as education is always appropriate but a smear campaign should not be part of that debate.

The scurrilous campaign of fear generated through the extremist fundraising letters of Virginia Delegate John S. Buckley, the Americans Against Union Control of Government, and the National Tax Limitation Committee is inappropriate for a national debate on the future of education in America.

The Department of Education was established by the Congress after several years of hearings, testimony, committee actions, and debate. A Cabinet-level Department was created to assure that education, the cornerstone of a democracy, was considered at the highest levels of the Executive Branch; and that education programs are managed efficiently and effectively without duplication and multiple levels of bureaucracy. (See enclosed)

According to the Americans Against Union Control of Government, *"Jimmy Carter started this government agency as a payoff for Union Bosses at the National Education Association Teachers Union (NEA)... Now the $15 Billion Department of Education is almost totally controlled by the NEA Union Bosses."* This must come as quite a shock to Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and the high officials of the Department, including Robert Billings, Director of Regional Liaison, formerly Executive Director of the Moral Majority, and Charles Heatherly, Executive Secretary and formerly Vice President of the Heritage Foundation.

All of the letters use the same unsavory techniques.

1. *Emotional exploitation*--Extremists hurl allegations revolving around sex and local control issues which are totally untrue but emotionally charged.

> *"Now let me tell you what the Department of Education is doing to your children, your grandchildren, and all of our beloved youngsters... Graphic and detailed sex education is mandatory for all children nine years old. And the Department of Education now wants schools across America to force boys and girls to share the same locker rooms for sports"* (Excerpted from letter of Delegate Buckley).

Not only are the charges untrue but there are no sex education programs under the Department of Education. Such programs are administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

> *"(NEA) promoted a 'nationalized school curriculim' (sic) where the federal bureaucrats and NEA Union Officials take the place of parents and local school board members to decide what your children should be taught in school"* (Excerpted from letter of the National Tax Limitation Committee).

NEA believes that local school boards and state governments should administer and deliver education services. The federal role in education has been and should be to ensure that all Americans have an equal educational opportunity and to assist states and communities to improve the quality of education.

2. *Coercion for money*-By conjuring up visions of bizarre ills and dire fates to befall young people, extremist groups attempt to convince the public to donate money to save America from this destiny.

> *"Please, for the sake of our children and President Reagan, mail your petitions and contributions today. Remember, you can't afford to let sex activists poison your children's minds"* (Excerpted from Delegate Buckley's letter).

> *"So please return your signed petition to me today along with your contributions to AAUCG for $15, $25, or more if you can afford it"* (Excerpted from letter of Americans Against Union Control of Government).

> *"But unless we can raise the $136,500 we need to put pressure on members of Congress – we could see the Department of Education bureaucracy continue to grow"* (Excerpted from letter of the National Tax Limitation Committee).

3. *Use of famous names*–Smear and fear campaigns are given credibility in the eyes of the public when famous names are part of the letterhead. Delegate Buckley uses the Virginia House of Delegates stationary. The Americans Against Union Control of Government feature Senator Orrin Hatch, Senator Jesse Helms, and Representative Mickey Edwards. The National Tax Limitation Committee letterhead includes the White House Special Assistant to the President for Policy Development, Robert Carleson, and economist Milton Friedman.

4. *The "big lie" technique*–Propagandists have a basic tenet that the "big lie," repeated often enough, will be considered truth. The petitions attached to their letters use this technique by repeating sex and payoff charges.

> *"WHEREAS, the Department of Education has contributed to the greatest sex misinformation program America has ever seen, where the school children of America are being taught that homosexuality is normal and free love is permissible. . .*
>
> *NOW AND THEREFORE, I demand that the Liberals in Congress who created the Department of Education heed the public will and support President Reagan in abolishing this monstrosity"* (Excerpted from a Petition of the National Tax Limitation Committee).
>
> *"WHEREAS: The federal government's Department of Education bureaucracy was created as a political 'payoff' to the National Education Association Teachers Union (NEA).*

APPENDIX B-3

WHEREAS: ***The NEA has used the Department of Education and my tax dollars to achieve its own goal of total federal control over local schools"*** (Excerpted from a Contribution Reply of the National Tax Limitation Committee)'

If you have any questions or would like a copy of these letters, please contact NEA Government Relations at 833-5411.

Sincerely,

Linda Tarr-Whelan

Linda Tarr-Whelan
Director of Government Relations

Department of Education COALITION

APPENDIX C

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS SUPPORTING THE COALITION
(State and local affiliates not individually listed)
May, 1982

ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF USA
AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION, & DANCE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION (AACTE)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES (AACJC)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (AASA)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES (AASCU)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (AAUP)
AMERICAN COALITION OF CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES (ACCD)
AMERICAN DANCE GUILD
AMERICAN EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AERA)
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (AFGE)
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY, & MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME)
AMERICAN GI FORUM OF THE UNITED STATES
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA)
AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN PERSONNEL & GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION (APGA)
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION (ASA)
AMERICAN THEATER ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (AVA)
ASPIRA CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY
ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY
ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CITIZENS
ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION & CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT (ASCD)
ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED (TAG)
ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS OF U.S. & CANADA (ASBO)

CHILDRENS DEFENSE FUND (CDF)
COALITION FOR ALTERNATIVES IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
COALITION OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
COALITION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (COPUS)
COLLEGE MUSIC SOCIETY (CMS)
COMMITTEE FOR URBAN PROGRAM UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH (CEDAR)
COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (CEC)
COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT & SUPPORT OF EDUCATION (CASE)
COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS (CCSSO)
COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS (CGCS)
CUBAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC. (CALDEF)

444 North Capitol Street, N.W. Suite 210 Washington D.C. 20001 (202) 638-5656

APPENDIX C-2

DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER REGION XIII
EL CONGRESO NACIONAL DE ASUNTOS COLEGIALES (CONAC)

FEDERAL EDUCATION PROJECT OF THE LAWYERS COMMITTEE

HISPANIC HIGHER EDUCATION COALITION
HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

INTERAMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS (ICPS)
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF FINE ARTS DEAN
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION (IRA)

LEARNING RESOURCES NETWORK (LERN)
LULAC NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS, INC.

MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
MEXICAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE & EDUCATIONAL FUND
MID-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
MIGRANT LEGAL ACTION PROGRAM INC. (MLAP)
MIGRANT STUDENTS RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM
MUSIC EDUCATORS NATIONAL CONFERENCE (MENC)
MUSIC TEACHERS NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (MTNA)

NATIONAL ASIAN PACIFIC ALLIANCE (NAPA)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION (NABE)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN (NAGC)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ADMINISTRATORS OF STATE & FEDERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NAESP)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ESEA TITLE I COORDINATORS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FARMWORKER ORGANIZATIONS (NAFO)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEPS AND CAMPS DIRECTORS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC CONTINUING AND ADULT EDUCATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUPIL PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATORS (NAPPA)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NASSP)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (NASW)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION (NASBE)
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS OF MIGRANT EDUCATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UNIVERSITIES & LAND GRANT COLLEGES
NATIONAL AUDIO-VISUAL ASSOCIATION (NAVA)
NATIONAL BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
NATL COALITION OF HISPANIC MENTAL HEALTH/HUMAN SERV ORG (COSSMHO)
NATIONAL COALITION OF ESEA TITLE I PARENTS
NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CITIZENS IN EDUCATION (NCCE)
NATIONAL COMMUNITY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NCEA)
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF PARENTS & TEACHERS (PTA)

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (AFGE)
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS (NCSC)
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (NCTE)
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS (NCTM)
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NEA)
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND
NATIONAL IMAGE, INC.
NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NIEA)
NATIONAL PEARL (Public Education & Religious Liberty)
NATIONAL PUERTO RICAN FORUM (NPRF)
NATIONAL REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION (NRA)
NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION (NSBA)
NATIONAL SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (NSVP)
NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN & ADULTS WITH AUTISM
NATIONAL STUDENT EDUCATIONAL FUND (NSEF)
NATIONAL URBAN COALITION
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

OPERATION PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity)
OVERSEAS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (OEA)

SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION (SCA)
STUDENT NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (SNEA)

UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF EVENING STUDENTS
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
UNITED STATES STUDENT ASSOCIATION (USSA)
UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE LABOR EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
UNIVERSITY OF MID-AMERICA

WOMENS EQUITY ACTION LEAGUE